Goitre and Iodine deficiency diseases

540. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Goitre and Iodine deficiency disorder/diseases are on the rise in the country;

(b) if so, the reasons for the rise of these diseases; and

(c) the steps taken to eradicate these diseases?

THE MINSITER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. R. ANTULAY): (a) and (b) The number of Goitre and other Iodine Deficiency Disorders is increasing in view of the continuous identification of new goitre endemic areas in the country;

(c) In order to control Iodine Deficiency Disorders the Government is implementing the scheme of Universal Iodidation of salt under the National Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control Programme. Under this programme, funds are being provided to the States/ Union Territorites for the following activities:

(a) Establishment of IOD Control Cell.

(b) Publicity and Health Education.

(c) Conducting IOD Surcys/re-surveys.

(d) Establishment of IOD monitoring Laboratory.

(e) Monitoring the quality of iodised salt.

Medical fitness of Army Officials

541. SHRI VIRENDRA KATARIA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Army Medical Corps have prepared a Medical Report revealing that many of the top ranking army officials fall in low medical category;

(b) if so, the reasons for their not being medically fit; and

(c) the action proposed to be taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINSITER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE AND DEPTT. OF DEFENCE RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT) SHRI MALIKARJUN) (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Transportation of Iodised Salt in open wagons

542. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the potency of Iodine is lost when the iodised salt is transported in open wagons in Railways;

(b) whether it is also a fact that there is a three month gap in making an indent for a wagon and actually getting it for transfer of salt; and

(c) if so, what steps Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SURESH KALMADI): (a) to (c) There may be some transit losses in the iodine content of iodised salt when transported in open wagons but there are safe-guards provided as the level of iodisation fixed at manufacturing end is 30 parts per million whereas the level required at the consuming end is only 15 parts per million. Besides, iodised salt is required

to be packed in High Density Polythene woven sacks or jute bags laminated or lined with plastic films. Railways endeavour to spply covered wagons during certain periods of rainy season to the extent possible. There have been time lag between registration and supply of wagons on some Railways due to competing demands but efforts have been made to step-up wagon supplies giving priorities to areas needing urgent movement.

Situation in J & K

543. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether steps are being taken by Government to settle J & K affairs;

(b) if so, what is the present position; and

(c) the details of the measures adopted to bring back normalcy in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI): (a) to (c) The aim of the Government is to ensure that complete peace and normalcy, and towards this end the democratic and representative institutions, are restored in the State of Jammu and Kashmir at the earliest. The Government is keeping a close watch and is continuously reviewing the situation, and a number of steps have been taken to creat conditions conducive to this objective. These include; sustained and targetted operations to contain the activities of the militants and reduce the fear of the gun; stepping up the peace of development and economic activities in the State to create additional employment opportunities for the youth and motivating the people to move towards their normal life and activities; reactivation of the civil administration and restoring its morale and normal activities; efforts to strengthen the confidence of the people in and enlisting their cooperative with the administration; reactivation of the political elements in the State; and, encouragement to the people to strengthen the peace process through other confidence building measures, including increased transparency, release of detenues, etc.

Government has also been holding consultations with leaders of the various political parties and groups at the national level and from the State. Recently the Prime Minister also made a Statement which *inter-alia* states the commitment of the Government to preserve the special Constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir, its willingness to strengthen the autonomy of the State, within the Constitution, keeping in view the aspirations of the people of the entire State, and restoration of the nomenclatures of "Wazir-e-Azam" and "Sadar-e-Riyasat" and the plans of the Government to formulate additional financial and development benefits for the State.

The various measures taken by the Government have had a definite positive impact on the situation and the overall atmoshpere and mood of the people, and after considering all aspects of the situation the Government had recently recommended to the Election Commission to initiate steps for conducting elections in the State. However, the Election Commission did not agree with the recommendation. A public interest litigation has been filed against the decision of the Commission and the matter is now sub-judice. Government will continue to make intensive efforts to further consolidate the situation towards its earlier stated objectives.